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ABSTRACT

Implementing an educational program on time is not as important as being properly prepared for implementation. The responses to a number of key questions can reveal whether the program has been adequately planned. Once the program is in operation it must be effectively evaluated. Successful evaluation requires a systematic, clear procedure that is easy to use, that allows evaluation during program operation, that examines program effectiveness and the achievement of objectives, and that provides information for future planning. This document includes worksheets and questions that provide the basic necessities for an evaluation procedure. (Author/PGD)

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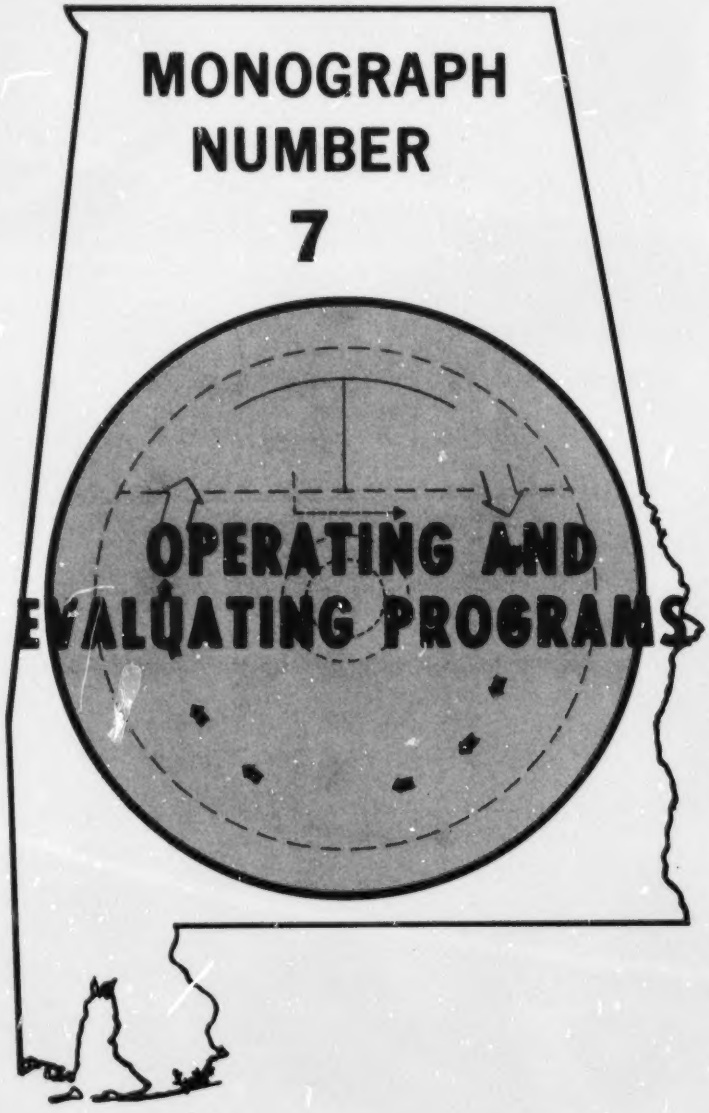
MONOGRAPH NUMBER 7



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Six — Formulating the Program Implementation Plan and Securing and Allocating Resources

Seven — Operating and Evaluating the Program

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SYSTEMATIC PLANNING SERIES
FOR LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCIES

MONOGRAPH NUMBER 7

OPERATING AND EVALUATING THE PROGRAM

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AUG 7 1980

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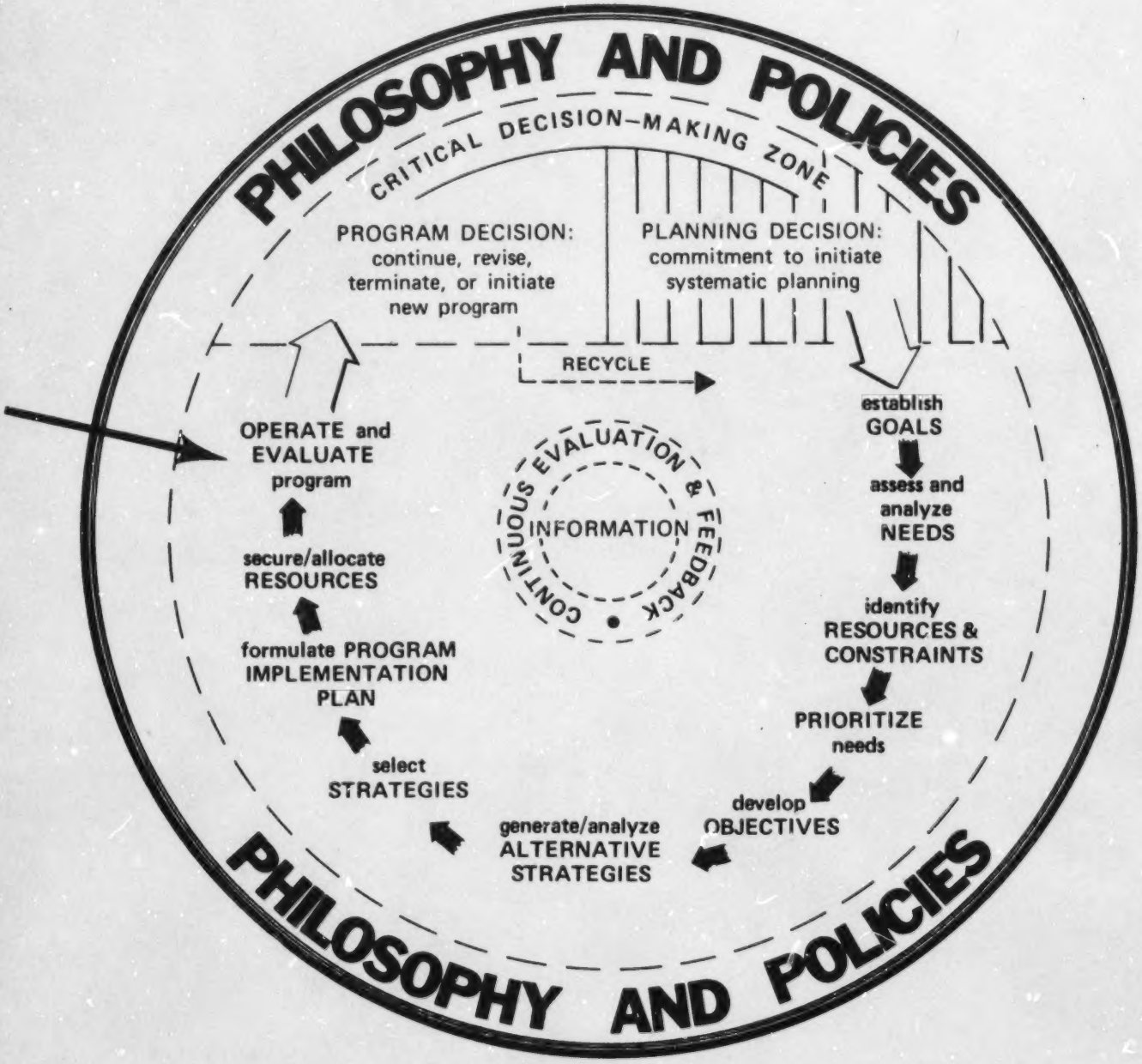

A PLANNING CYCLE

OFFICE OF PLANNING AND EVALUATION
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OPERATING AND EVALUATING PROGRAMS

After the program implementation plan has been systematically developed and resources necessary for implementation have been committed (monograph number six), the program still must be put into operation. It doesn't just suddenly and mysteriously begin operating. The program that has been so carefully planned must be activated. Not only is it necessary that the machinery be set in motion at the appropriate time, but someone must know when that time has come. Educators sometimes refer to a teachable moment in the learning experience of children, implying that there is an ideal time when maximum learning will occur. Putting a plan into action may be similar, in many respects, to the teachable moment, although a more descriptive term for it may be moment of truth, because when the time arrives for all of the planning efforts to begin paying off in the form of a real live, operating program, somebody must be prepared to kick it off. Most people are willing and eager to implement programs and even like the feeling of accomplishment and satisfaction that accompanies this action. However, getting a program in operation that has a reasonable chance of successfully meeting the objectives it has been designed to attain is not always as simple or easy as pushing a button, pulling a switch, or issuing a directive. It can be if proper planning has been done, but one of the real problems in education is premature program implementation. In the rush to do something to meet a pressing need or resolve a "critical" problem, people often make the mistake of hastily conceiving a progam and putting it in operation without following a logical, orderly planning process. Those using this approach are inviting trouble and usually can expect to get what they ask for. A program which has not been carefully and systematically developed in accordance with sound planning principles, and which has no well-formulated implementation plan, is not likely to be very effective. In fact, instead of resolving problems, it may very well compound them and place an even greater strain upon already limited resources. Before giving the go-ahead for any program, decision makers and/or implementors (not always the same person(s) must make certain that the program is ready for operation. Usually a program implementation date will have been set. Certainly, every effort should be made to begin as planned, but not at any cost. Starting on time is not as important as being properly prepared to start. A look at the program implementation plan suggested in monograph six will prove helpful in reaching this critical decision. A review of the summary of the minimum elements of an implementation plan and consideration of several other related factors (most of which have already received attention at some point in the planning process) bring to mind important questions which must be answered to the satisfaction of the person(s) responsible for giving the final go-ahead. Although by no means an exhaustive listing, questions of the following type accentuate the necessity for a thorough knowledge and understanding of all aspects of a program prior to its inauguration.

- Is this the "right" time to implement?
- How will the program be received?
- Will those for whom the program is designed truly benefit from it? What is the real purpose of the program?
- Have sufficient resources (personnel, both quantity and quality, equipment, facilities, time, etc.) been assigned to give reasonable assurance of success? Are both funding and commitment adequate?
- What impact and/or effect will the program have upon people and other programs? What are the spinoff effects likely to be?
- Is there anything about the program that violates existing laws, policy, sound philosophy, educational principles and/or practices, or learning theory? Does it reflect the philosophy of the school or system? Does it have the support of decision makers, implementors, and beneficiaries?
- Is it related to the established goals and identified needs?
- If the program is operated as planned, is it likely to produce the desired outcome(s)? Will objectives be achieved?
- Are provisions for regular and/or continuous input and feedback adequate?
- Is there a planned procedure for reporting progress and/or problems and an established method for dealing with unanticipated difficulties? Who will make necessary changes or adjustments when needed to get the program back on the right track? How will people know to take appropriate action?
- Do the people who have responsibilities also have the authority necessary to get the job done?
- Have adequate provisions been made for effective communications? Have provisions been made to keep people informed about progress, problems, etc.? (including students, parents, teachers, community).
- Does everyone have a clear understanding of who does what, when? Have work schedules, calendars, etc. been developed?

- Is it clear to all involved how success will be determined? How will the program be evaluated?

- At a specified time in the life of the program, will it be possible to evaluate its effectiveness? Are there provisions for making changes in the program on the basis of formative evaluation data?

Obviously, all of the above concerns will not be appropriate for every program. On the other hand, certain programs may require consideration of additional questions. The nature and scope of the program will suggest the number, types, and appropriateness of questions.

Once the decision has been made to implement and the program is in operation, attention must be focused upon evaluation. The importance of appropriate, adequate evaluation provisions cannot be overemphasized. (The necessity of developing an effective evaluation procedure long before the program is implemented has been well established and substantiated in monograph number six.)

Evaluation has been defined in a multitude of ways, but the following definitions seem to capture the meaning and describe it very appropriately:

"...a process for determining relative worth or value."

"...a process in which measurement and judgment are combined to make possible decisions which will change and improve education."

"...the process of obtaining and providing useful information for making decisions."

"...activities undertaken to determine the value of a program, project, technique, process, or product in relationship to a predetermined objective or set of criteria."

While there are several concepts of evaluation, most writers agree that it is a process, to provide reliable information for decision makers. This makes it crucial to the entire planning process, but especially so when making decisions relative to educational programs.

Unintentionally, we sometimes do ourselves, the schools, students, and the cause of education an injustice and a disservice with typical "evaluations" such as:

- I think student attitudes are much better.

- It seems that attendance has improved.
- Students appear to be less interested in school.
- Obviously, things are going better this year.
- I believe we've had fewer discipline problems.
- Everyone seems to be pleased with the new reading program.
- I feel that the new teachers are doing a good job.
- Teacher morale is noticeably higher since salaries were increased.
- More money for schools assures better education for boys and girls.

What evidence can be produced to support or verify any of the above statements? What happens when people say "substantiate your claims," or "don't tell us how good you are, show us!"

An alarming number of educational decisions are made on the basis of past experience, emotion, estimating, trial and error, intuition, values, judgment, feelings, erroneous information, faulty perceptions, too little information, ... No doubt people will continue to rely upon one or more of these approaches in making evaluations and arriving at decisions. However, few would dispute the fact that a sounder, more objective evaluation process is desirable and needed if educational programs are to achieve their objectives and effectively satisfy identified needs.

Dependence upon any of the above means of evaluation to the exclusion of a more objective procedure is loaded with dangers. This is especially true of evaluations made solely on the basis of feelings, emotions, or values. It is human nature for people to make value judgments -- to deny evidence in favor of personal biases -- to let values overshadow evidence -- to allow the "heart to rule the head," so to speak. In other words, there is a tendency to yield to one's personal value system and either question or reject evaluation that is in conflict with our own beliefs. This manifests itself in such ways as rationalizing, criticizing, discrediting, ignoring, avoiding, etc. Unfortunately, evaluation evidence either will go unused or be misused as long as it does not affect our values. Mere exposure to evidence does not alter values. Neither does it necessarily result in changes in attitudes or behavior. (Research reveals that people with closed belief systems avoid receiving facts from authoritative sources.) An adequate evaluation design should assure that evidence will be provided and presented in such a way that people will find it extremely difficult to remain unaffected by significant data. Adherence to a sensible, carefully planned evaluation process can prove to be a very effective way to

avoid many of the obvious pitfalls which accompany the highly unsatisfactory approaches described above.

Many times even conscientious educators who are sincere in their efforts and who have good intentions run into difficulty with evaluation because the necessary initial planning for it has not been done or they do not know how to handle it. Too often, evaluation is an afterthought or is viewed as a necessary evil that just happens at the end of a project or program, or school year. Frequently, those responsible for evaluation are unable to plan for it because they do not know or cannot decide in advance what questions they must be prepared to answer. Add to this the fact that objectives, which are basic to any evaluation attempt, are often poorly stated or non-existent, and meaningful evaluation is virtually impossible. Getting started in developing an adequate evaluation plan can be a problem without some basic guidelines or an organized, clearly defined procedure. What does a person need to know in order to evaluate a program? What is important or significant? What data should be collected? How can they be collected and interpreted in an objective manner? What information should be available if intelligent decisions are to be made? What questions should be asked if evaluation is to proceed in a planned, systematic manner which will result in determination of the relative worth, or value, or effectiveness of a program?

Past evaluation efforts have been unsuccessful, or inconclusive, or unfruitful for a variety of reasons, but the following weaknesses have accounted for a large portion of the difficulties:

- Tried to use complicated theoretical model replete with confusing jargon
- Used no model or systematic process at all
- Process employed required extensive training and/or large investments of time, effort, and other resources
- Process chosen required too much reorganization of the system and major changes in established activities
- Evaluation was not planned when the program was being planned
- Evaluation design did not provide for appropriate data collection and analyses
- Data were mishandled, or misrepresented, or misinterpreted (possibly manipulated)

- Process selected was not applicable to both product and process
- People responsible did not know how to plan or conduct evaluation and did not bother to involve anyone who did

The evaluation process which will be described in succeeding pages can go a long way toward remedying some of these ills.

The basic purpose of evaluation, as stated earlier is to determine whether or not educational programs are doing what they were designed to do. With this in mind, an obvious but extremely important basic evaluation question arises. Do our educational programs achieve their objectives? In order to answer this question satisfactorily, it is necessary to:

- Ask appropriate specific questions
- Seek and secure the answers to these questions
- Determine what these answers mean

The proposed evaluation procedure which follows provides assistance by suggesting:

- What specific questions should be asked
- How to get dependable answers to these questions
- How to interpret the data collected in answer to the questions

This process is treated in greater depth in a separate publication, *Program Evaluation/Validation: A Manual for School Programs,* distributed by the Alabama Department of Education. The basic elements of the approach suggested in the Manual are included on the following worksheets. The questions and format can be adapted easily to fit a particular situation or set of circumstances. Use of this approach avoids many of the pitfalls cited earlier and increases the probability that the quality of the evaluation will be much improved. The procedure outlined can serve as a guide during the program planning stages to assure that adequate provisions are made in the beginning for posing and answering appropriate questions. It then becomes a valuable tool for monitoring ongoing activities and determining end of program results in terms of program effectiveness.

Some of the notable features which make the suggested evaluation process worthy of serious consideration are:

- Practical, easily understood and administered (requires minimum instruction and expense, and avoids confusing jargon)
- Helps one avoid many pitfalls and problems in planning stages by providing structure and systematic approach which forces early consideration of important factors
- Overcomes common problems of "how to get started" and "what questions are appropriate"
- Makes possible a continual check on status and/or progress of a program, thus affording opportunities for reshaping or modifying the program while it is in operation
- Permits an objective determination of relative worth (examines end results, program effectiveness, objective achievement)
- Provides important information for decision making (will program be continued, modified, abandoned, or will a new program be developed?)

SUGGESTED PROGRAM EVALUATION PROCESS

EVALUATION WORKSHEETS

PART ONE

1. What are the purpose and objectives of the program?

   A. What is the purpose of the program?

      1. Is the purpose clearly stated?
      2. Is the rationale for the purpose well supported?
      3. Does the purpose logically lead to the objectives? If not, suggest needed changes.

B. What are the objectives?

Objectives (list)	Clearly stated?	Communicate a specific intent?	Directly related to the purpose of the program?	Differentiate between				Can be translated into a plan of action, procedure, etc.
				Product	Process	Learner oriented	Non-learner oriented	
1.								
2.								
3.								
4.								

(For Use During Program Planning)

If an objective does not meet the criteria outlined on the preceding page (clear, communicates, related to purpose, differentiates between product and process, learner and non-learner oriented, can be translated into plan of action), review it with the idea of restating it below in more acceptable form.

Restated objectives:

1.

2.

3.

4.

C. Are objectives stated so that attainment can be shown?

Objectives	Can attainment be shown?	Does objective specify:			If not, what needs to be done?
		What is to be done?	By whom?	Under what conditions?	
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					

II. How can the accomplishment of the objectives be measured?

Objective No.	Proposed evaluation procedures	Do the measurement procedures relate to the objective?	Do the instruments/ techniques measure the attribute under consideration?	Is the adequacy of these measures established?		Are the procedures sufficiently detailed?			
				Reliability	Validity	Subjects	Instructions	Timing	Conditions

III. Has the program design taken into account outside variables affecting the program such as court orders, population shifts, sampling problems, etc.?

Questions	Explain and/or justify
A. Is the population for which the program is designed the same as that with which it will be implemented? _____	
B. Is the school system staff capable of implementing the program? _____ Personnel adequate? _____ Trained? _____	
C. Are the facilities adequate? _____ Resources adequate? _____	
D. Are there political and/or administrative restraints? _____	

IV. Can formative and summative judgments be made on the basis of the evaluation data gathered?

A. Are there built-in procedures by which evaluation data can be used in a formative sense? _____

1. Are changes made in the program on the basis of evaluation data? _____

2. Can the evaluation data provide the necessary kind of feedback to result in formative use of the data? _____

B. At a specified time in the life of the program, can judgments about the effectiveness of the program be made on the basis of those data? _____

PART TWO

I. Identifying the attribute to be measured.
II. Choosing the instrumentation/procedure.
III. Developing the instrumentation/procedure.

Objective Number	Attribute to be measured	Instrument and/or technique	Available?	Reliable?	Valid?	Comments

IV. Delineating procedures for collecting data.

Objective Number	General measurement techniques	Special conditions	Name/type instruments	Target groups	Scheduled dates	Person(s) responsible

PART THREE

I. Nature of the Analysis

II. Statistical Analysis

Objective Number	Statistical	Non-statistical	Criterion referenced	Norm referenced	Statistical Procedures		Comments
					Descriptive	Inferential	

Obviously, certain programs will not call for an evaluation design that is as elaborate or detailed as the preceding one. An approach which may be useful and appropriate under certain conditions is suggested below.

Specify (and develop suitable format for) at least the following essential elements: attribute or product to be evaluated, procedures to be used, instrumentation, responsibility, target group, evaluation time table, provisions for collecting, analyzing, reporting, and using data.

The following product objective provides a good example for purposes of illustrating this approach. By May, 1977, students in the _____ High School will demonstrate an improved attitude toward the school environment as measured by pre and post semantic differential scores.

What attribute will be measured?

Attitudes (perception of school)

What procedure will be used?

A semantic differential will be administered pre and post.

What instrumentation is required?

Semantic differentials must be developed (will use thoroughly researched concepts and objective pairs).

Instrumentation: Activities Director and consultant to develop

Administration: School counselors

Scoring: School Counselors

Data analysis: Consultant

Reporting results: Consultant (prepare reports)
Principal (disseminate)

What is the target group?

All students in the _____ High School.

Time table: Instrumentation

(1) Pre-test:

(a) Ready by September 1, 1976

(b) Administered by September 24, 1976

(c) Scored by October 7, 1976

(2) Post-test:

(a) Ready by September 1, 1976

(b) Administered by May 14, 1977

(c) Scored by May 28, 1977

(3) Data analyzed by June 30, 1977

(4) Report prepared and ready for use by July 15, 1977.

How will data collection be handled?

Respondents will mark on the instruments.

Counselors will calculate composite scores (a numerical value will be assigned each response category) for all responses and will graph the results of both tests for comparison purposes.

How will data be analyzed?

The direction of individual responses will be studied and compared to determine if positive attitude changes occur. Pre and post composite graphs will be examined. Factor analytic procedures will be used.

How will data be reported?

Principal will receive report and disseminate information to appropriate persons.

How will data be used?

Principal, faculty, Superintendent, and Board of Education will use data for making decisions and planning more effective programs.